

1 AN ACT concerning government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the 9-8-8  
5 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Workgroup Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

7 (1) In the summer of 2022, 31% of Illinois adults  
8 experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression more than half  
9 of the days of each week, which is an increase of 20% since  
10 2019.

11 (2) Suicide is the third leading cause of death in  
12 Illinois for young adults who are 15 to 34 years of age, and it  
13 is the 11th leading cause of death for all Illinoisans. In  
14 2021, 1,488 Illinois lives were lost to suicide, and an  
15 estimated 376,000 adults had thoughts of suicide.

16 (3) Historically, people in Illinois and nationwide have  
17 had few and fragmented options to call upon during a mental  
18 health crisis and have relied upon 9-1-1 and various privately  
19 funded crisis lines for help.

20 (4) In July 2022, Illinois joined the nation in launching  
21 the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, a universal 3-digit  
22 dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental  
23 health hotline, meant to offer 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week

1 access to trained counselors who can help people experiencing  
2 mental health-related distress.

3 (5) Congress delegated to the states significant  
4 decision-making responsibility for structuring and funding the  
5 states' 9-8-8 call center networks.

6 (6) States had limited data on which to base their initial  
7 decisions because the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
8 Services Administration's projections of future increases in  
9 call volumes varied widely, and there was no national  
10 best-practice model for the number and organization of 9-8-8  
11 call centers.

12 (7) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
13 Administration described the 2022 launch of 9-8-8 as being  
14 just the first step toward reimagining our country's mental  
15 health crisis system and stipulated that long-term  
16 transformation will rely on the willingness of states and  
17 territories to build and invest strategically in every level  
18 of the continuum of mental health crisis care over the next  
19 several years.

20 (8) In 2023, the General Assembly and other State leaders  
21 can assess the first year of operations of the 9-8-8 call  
22 center system, identify legislative solutions to any funding  
23 and programmatic gaps that are emerging, and set the course  
24 for Illinois to eventually lead the country in providing  
25 quality and accessible 9-8-8 care and in connecting  
26 individuals with the mental health resources necessary to

1 sustain long-term recovery.

2 (9) The launch of the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline  
3 has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve  
4 mental health crisis care in Illinois.

5 (10) Illinois' success or failure in building a  
6 high-quality call center network in the initial years will be  
7 an important factor in determining whether 9-8-8 is perceived  
8 as a trusted resource in the State.

9 (11) Illinois' success or failure in building a  
10 high-quality 9-8-8 call center network will disproportionately  
11 affect Black, Brown, and other marginalized residents who are  
12 most likely to rely on crisis services to access mental health  
13 care and are most likely to be criminalized or harmed by the  
14 existing crisis response system.

15 Section 10. Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Workgroup.

16 (a) The Department of Human Services, Division of Mental  
17 Health, shall convene a working group that includes:

18 (1) bicameral, bipartisan members of the General  
19 Assembly;

20 (2) at least one representative from the Department of  
21 Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and  
22 Recovery; the Department of Public Health; the Department  
23 of Healthcare and Family Services; and the Department of  
24 Insurance;

25 (3) the State's Chief Behavioral Health Officer;

1 (4) the Director of the Children's Behavioral Health  
2 Transformation Initiative;

3 (5) service providers from the regional and statewide  
4 9-8-8 call centers;

5 (6) representatives of organizations that represent  
6 people with mental health conditions or substance use  
7 disorders;

8 (7) representatives of organizations that operate an  
9 Illinois social services helpline or crisis line other  
10 than 9-8-8, including veterans' crisis services;

11 (8) more than one individual with personal or family  
12 lived experience of a mental health condition or substance  
13 use disorder;

14 (9) experts in research and operational evaluation;  
15 and

16 (10) and any other person or persons as determined by  
17 the Department of Human Services, Division of Mental  
18 Health.

19 (b) On or before December 31, 2023, the Department of  
20 Human Services, Division of Mental Health, shall submit a  
21 report to the General Assembly regarding the Workgroup's  
22 findings under Section 15 related to the 9-8-8 call system.

23 Section 15. Responsibilities; action plan.

24 (a) The Workforce has the following responsibilities:

25 (1) to review existing information about the first

1 year of 9-8-8 call center operations in Illinois,  
2 including, but not limited to, state-level and  
3 county-level use data, progress around the federal  
4 measures of success determined by the Substance Abuse and  
5 Mental Health Services Administration, and research  
6 conducted by any State-contracted partners around cost  
7 projections, best-practice standards, and geographic  
8 needs;

9 (2) to review other states' models and emerging best  
10 practices around structuring 9-8-8 call center networks,  
11 with an emphasis on promoting high-quality phone  
12 interventions, coordination with other crisis lines and  
13 crisis services, and connection to community-based support  
14 for those in need;

15 (3) to review governmental infrastructures created in  
16 other states to promote sustainability and quality in  
17 9-8-8 call centers and crisis system operations;

18 (4) to review changes and new initiatives that have  
19 been advanced by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
20 Services Administration and Vibrant Emotional Health since  
21 Vibrant transitioned to 9-8-8 in July 2022, such as new  
22 training curricula for call takers and new technology  
23 platforms;

24 (5) to consider input from call center personnel,  
25 providers, and advocates about strengths, weaknesses, and  
26 service gaps in Illinois; and

1 (6) to develop an action plan with recommendations to  
2 the General Assembly that include the following:

3 (A) a future structure for a network of 9-8-8 call  
4 centers in Illinois that will best promote equity,  
5 quality, and connection to care;

6 (B) metrics that Illinois should use to measure  
7 the success of our statewide system in promoting  
8 equity, quality, and connection to care and a system  
9 to measure those metrics, considering the metrics  
10 imposed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
11 Services Administration as only a starting point for  
12 measurement of success in Illinois;

13 (C) recommendations to further fund and strengthen  
14 the rest of Illinois' behavioral health services and  
15 crisis assistance programs based on lessons learned  
16 from 9-8-8 use; and

17 (D) recommendations on a long-term governmental  
18 infrastructure to provide advice and recommendations  
19 necessary to sustainably implement and monitor the  
20 progress of the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in  
21 Illinois and to make recommendations for the statewide  
22 improvement of behavioral health crisis response and  
23 suicide prevention services in the State.

24 The action plan shall be approved by a majority of  
25 Workgroup members.

26 (b) Nothing in the action plan filed under this Section

1 shall be construed to supersede the recommendations of the  
2 Statewide Advisory Committee or Regional Advisory Committees  
3 created by the Community Emergency Services and Support Act.

4 Section 20. Repeal. This Act is repealed on January 1,  
5 2025.

6 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
7 becoming law.